

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for the careful consideration given the present application. The application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office action, and amended as necessary to more clearly and particularly describe the subject matter that applicants regard as the invention.

Claims 1-7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Iijima in view of Andaashu. Claim 1 has been amended and claim 2 has been canceled.

In claim 1, a combination object image is combined with a base on the base image, to generate a composite image. A mask image data record section records a plurality of types of mask image data representing mask images, the mask image data corresponding to the base image. Therefore, claim 1 requires mask image data that corresponds to a base image upon which a combination object image is combined. Further, the mask image data specifies a combining position of the combination object image to be combined with the base image.

In Iijima, a mask is used simply to cut out an image. See, e.g., Fig. 10A – 10D. The image is cut out before hand using the mask, and the resulting cut-out image is combined with a base image. See, e.g., Fig. 13A – 13D. Therefore, Iijima's mask does not correspond to a base image. Iijima's cut-out image is placed on the base image, but the mask does not correspond to the base image. Claim 1, to the contrary, requires mask image data corresponding to the base image that specifies a combining position of the combination object image to be combined with the base image. Such mask image data corresponding to a base image is not taught by Iijima.

Further, in claim 1, a preview image (see, e.g., Fig. 3, screen 2) is generated and displayed by combining the base image and the corresponding mask image. And then, in accordance with the preview image including the mask image, the combination object image is

picked up while the combining position and the image pickup area of the combination object image are specified by the mask image data. The claimed combination object image is picked up "in accordance with" the mask image of the displayed preview image and, therefore, the preview image is displayed prior to picking up the combination object image. Iijima does not teach displaying such a preview image and then subsequently picking up a combination object image in accordance with the mask image of the displayed preview image.

The deficiencies of Iijima, discussed above, are not corrected by Andaashu. In view of the differences between the cited combination of references and claim 1, applicants respectfully submit that claim 1 is allowable over said combination. Claims 3-7 depend from claim 1.

In light of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance and notice to that effect is hereby requested. If it is determined that the application is not in condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to initiate a telephone interview with the undersigned attorney to expedite prosecution of the present application.

If there are any additional fees resulting from this communication, please charge same to our Deposit Account No. 16-0820, our Order No. NGB-38036.

Respectfully submitted,
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